

Message from Dean Whiteley

As you may have heard, Dr. David Sisson, head of our cardiology section, is moving to a position with the Oregon State University College of Veterinary Medicine in January.

“Dr. Sisson leaves very big shoes to fill,” acknowledges Dr. Peter Constable, interim head of the Department of Veterinary Clinical Medicine. The vital cardiology program built by Dr. Sisson will continue under the leadership of Dr. Mark Oyama, and a search for a second cardiology faculty member will begin as soon as possible, according to Dr. Constable.

Working with Dr. Oyama are two cardiology residents, Dr. Whit Church, now in his second year, and newcomer Dr. Marco Margiocco (whose arrival at Illinois highlights the creation of a “sister cardiology program” between Illinois and the University of Torino in his native Italy). While the cardiology service looks to recruit a second faculty member, clinical service will continue as usual through May 2005.

Dr. Oyama is excited to continue the cardiology program’s strong tradition of teaching, research, and service and has been pursuing a number of interesting research questions with promise of valuable clinical applications. A trial for the development of blood marker for dilated cardiomyopathy (DCM) continues to enroll large-breed dogs, especially Great Danes and Doberman Pinschers. The costs of a complete screening, including ultrasound and ECG testing, will be defrayed by grant support from the Morris Animal Foundation and the American Kennel Club-Canine Health Foundation. Preliminary data look very good for the possibility of developing a useful blood screening test for early detection of this disease. If a blood test could be brought to market, it would reduce the costs of screening for heart disease below current costs for ultrasound and ECG.

In conjunction with Dr. Dianne Dunning and the Canine Rehabilitation Program, Dr. Oyama is conducting a study to assess the value of cardiovascular training on an underwater treadmill in hopes of improving heart function in large-breed dogs with heart disease. Preliminary

work is being done now in normal dogs, and Drs. Dunning and Oyama will be looking for dogs with mild heart disease to begin participation in the study at the beginning of 2005. This study is funded by the Doberman Pinscher Foundation of America.

Dr. Oyama has also been collaborating with researchers at the State University of New York-Albany to examine gene activity in dogs with DCM. Their findings, sampled from the more than 28,000 genes in the canine genome, will be published in an upcoming issue of the *American Journal of Veterinary Research*.

Other exciting news in cardiology: FDA is in the process of evaluating an application for use of pimobendan (Vetmedin®) in dogs with heart disease. This drug, which is already in veterinary use in Australia, Canada, and Europe, has tremendous potential for improving the quality of life of dogs with heart disease by increasing cardiac contractility and providing vasodilation. The Illinois cardiology service is optimistic that pimobendan will quickly become a valuable tool for treatment of heart failure.

Please join me in wishing Dr. Sisson success in his new position and in commending Dr. Oyama for his dedication not only to the clients and patients of the cardiology service and to his own research pursuits but also to the continued advancement of his department, the teaching hospital, and the College. I'm sure he would be happy to hear from you.

I would appreciate hearing from you, too. You may send email to dean@cvm.uiuc.edu.--
Herb